

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
CITY OF WATERTOWN  
January 3, 2023  
7:00 p.m.**

**Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith Presiding**

**Present:** Council Member Patrick J. Hickey  
Council Member Clifford G. Olney III  
Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce  
Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero  
Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith

**Also Present:** Kenneth A. Mix, City Manager  
Justin Miller, City Attorney

**City staff present:** Michael Delaney, Michael Lumbis, Logan Eddy, Geoffrey Urda

The City Manager presented the following reports to Council:

- Resolution No. 1 - Designating Depositories of City Funds for 2023
- Resolution No. 2 - Selecting Harris Beach PLLC as City Attorney On an Interim Basis
- Resolution No. 3 - Finding that Acquisition of Real Estate Owned by Watertown Golf Club, Inc. Will Not Have a Significant Impact on the Environment
- Resolution No. 4 - Reaffirming the Readoption of the Fiscal Year 2022-23 General Fund Budget – Purchase of Golf Course
- Resolution No. 5 - Reaffirming the Readoption of Fiscal Years 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget – Purchase of Golf Course
- Resolution No. 6 - Reaffirming the Approval of the Asset Purchase Agreement with Watertown Golf Club, Inc. and 1 Thompson Park, LLC
- Resolution No. 7 - Finding that Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of VL-1 Bellew Avenue South, Parcel Number 9-11-108.001 From Residence B to Commercial Will Not Have a Significant Impact on the Environment
- Public Hearing for City of Watertown 2019 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Amendment Public Hearing
- Public Hearing - Ordinance Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of VL-1 Bellew Avenue South, Parcel Number 9-11-108.001 from Residence B to Commercial
- Tabled Resolution - Approving the Site Plan for a 12,632 sq. ft. Parking Lot Expansion and Associated Site Improvements at 111 Breen Avenue, Parcel Number 8-01-214.100
- Restore NY Grant Application Public Hearing – YMCA, 146 Arsenal Street
- Restore NY Grant Application Special Project Public Hearing – Greenleaf Builders, 567 and 571 Fairbanks Street and 629 Factory Street

**Complete Reports on file in the office of the City Clerk**

Meeting opened with a moment of silence and Mayor Smith asked that it be in remembrance of former Mayor T. Urling Walker.

Pledge of Allegiance was given.

The reading of the minutes of the regular meeting of December 19, 2022, was dispensed and accepted as written by motion of Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero, seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

An email was received from Debbie and Bill Dermady, 118 Seymour Street, regarding a conversation that she had with Mayor Smith on the Hotline radio show. She expressed displeasure with Mayor Smith and asked for the City Manager to address the situation.

A letter was received from Roger W. Bradley of Melvin & Melvin PLLC, on behalf of his client Geoffrey Puccia, addressing each of the concerns with the site plan approval for 111 Breen Avenue.

An email was received from Thomas Ross of Storino Geomatics, PLLC regarding the site plan approval for 111 Breen Avenue. He urged Council to approve this, stating that failure to approve it will incur further costs and additional delays could be subject to litigation by his client's legal team.

An email was received from Anthony Doldo, stating that he has come to a personal and confidential agreement with Geoffrey Puccia in order to address the concerns discussed at the last Council Meeting. He asked that Council remove the resolution from the table and proceed with the process of passing it.

**Above communications were placed on file in the office of the City Clerk.**

### **PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

**Bill Bonner**, Watertown, told Council that he owns several properties in the City. He said he sustained a significant amount of damage to his properties from renters but was unable to receive assistance from the Police or his insurance company due to the lack of information on police reports. He expressed disappointment in how the Police and District Attorney handle property damage from renters and suggested the City offer tax abatement in situations like this because the value of properties goes down.

**Jason Traynor**, Watertown, stood in front of Council holding up several signs with messages on them.

**Jonathan Phillips**, 735 Mill Street, suggested bus shelters should be installed at Walmart and Curtis Apartments. He praised DPW staff for their handling of the recent blizzard. Lastly, he expressed concern about the golf carts being stored outside in the snow and his opposition to the City purchasing the golf course.

**Trina Kuan**, 267 Pratt Street, stated that there are a lot of issues in Watertown, which make it difficult to invest in the area. She mentioned Mr. Bonner's situation, noting there is a lack of Police involvement and protection, and said that is why she is not willing to move forward with her \$4 million investment idea to assist with affordable housing. She also mentioned a FOIL request and questioned why it was denied. Returning to Mr. Bonner's situation, she expressed frustration with the District Attorney, noting that the renter admitted to doing the damage to the rental property.

**Ben Shoen**, Academy Street, spoke of the lack of snow removal from City sidewalks, stating the process is not fast enough. He said the City should be able to cite the property owner onsite so the problem can

be fixed within a 24-hour period. Mentioning that the developers set a deadline of December 31 for the purchase of the golf course, he asked if the deal had been rescinded since it did not happen by that date due to the lawsuit. He applauded the taxpayer who brought the case forward. He spoke of comments made by Council Member Olney about an appraisal and mentioned the process of eminent domain to obtain the golf course. Lastly, he said that people who speak out against Council should not be harassed or threatened for doing so.

**Scott Garrabrant**, 140 Flower Avenue East, spoke against the purchase of the golf course, stating there is a strong majority of the public that is against it. He said he does not see the appeal to obtaining more parkland. He mentioned that public trust needs to be rebuilt and asked Council to follow a more diligent process, which includes seeking an appraisal.

**Robert (no last name given)**, Watertown, suggested Council consider a resolution which would allow Council to respond to people speaking during the Privilege of the Floor immediately instead of waiting for New Business. He spoke of the way Council Members have treated each other and how they conduct themselves during the meetings, stating that it is inappropriate. He said Council needs to conduct themselves in a professional manner despite their differences in opinions.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

**At 7:15 p.m. Mayor Smith asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning City of Watertown 2019 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Amendment Public Hearing.**

**Mayor Smith declared the hearing open at 7:15 p.m.**

No one spoke.

**Mayor Smith declared the hearing closed at 7:16 p.m.**

**At 7:16 p.m. Mayor Smith asked the City Clerk to read the notice of Public Hearing concerning changing the approved Zoning Classification of VL-1 Bellew Avenue South, Parcel Number 9-11-108.001 from Residence B to Commercial.**

**Mayor Smith declared the hearing open at 7:16 p.m.**

No one spoke.

**Mayor Smith declared the hearing closed at 7:17 p.m.**

## **RESOLUTIONS**

**Resolution No. 1 - Designating Depositories of City Funds for 2023**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS Section 30 of the City Charter requires the City Council to designate each year at its first meeting some incorporated bank or banks or trust company located in the City of Watertown for the deposit of all moneys belonging to the City,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following banks be and they are hereby designated as depositories of the City of Watertown, New York, for the year beginning January 1, 2023 and ending December 31, 2023:

Community Bank, N.A.  
Key Bank  
WSB Municipal Bank

And,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Community Bank, N.A., Key Bank and WSB Municipal Bank each be required to either execute a bond delivered to the City of Watertown, New York, as approved collateral or to deposit at a mutually agreed upon depository approved collateral of a value up to FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS (\$50,000,000).

**Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting yea.**

**Resolution No. 2 - Selecting Harris Beach PLLC as City Attorney On an Interim Basis**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS the City of Watertown is need of a City Attorney, and

WHEREAS Section 34 of the City Charter states that the City Council shall select an attorney or law firm to be retained on a contract basis to perform and discharge the usual duties of a City Attorney or Corporation Counsel, and

WHEREAS a Request for Proposals for legal services will be issued, and

WHEREAS a City Attorney is needed temporarily until the RFP selection process can be completed, and

WHEREAS Harris Beach PLLC has been identified as a law firm that can temporarily serve as City Attorney,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby selects Harris Beach PLLC as City Attorney on a temporary basis until a permanent one can be selected, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith is hereby authorized and directed to execute the Letter of Engagement with Harris Beach PLLC, a copy of which is attached and made part of this resolution, on behalf of the City of Watertown.

**Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce**

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith introduced Attorney Justin Miller, who was present at this meeting.

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.**

**Resolution No. 3 - Finding that Acquisition of Real Estate Owned by Watertown Golf Club, Inc. Will Not Have a Significant Impact on the Environment**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS Watertown Golf Club, Inc. (“The Club”) and 1 Thompson Park, LLC (“1 TP”) have offered to sell real estate and personal assets needed to operate the golf course known as the Watertown Golf Club in Thompson Park to the City of Watertown, and

WHEREAS the City Council wishes to purchase the assets to expand John C. Thompson Park and continue the operation of a golf course, and

WHEREAS the purchase of 63.84 acres adjacent to parkland is a Type I Action as defined by the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and 6 NYCRR Part 617, and

WHEREAS the City Council must evaluate the environmental impact of all Type I Actions that it proposes to directly undertake, and

WHEREAS there are no other involved agencies for SEQRA review as that term is defined in 6 NYCRR Part 617, and

WHEREAS to aid the City Council in its determination as to whether the proposed land purchase will have a significant adverse impact on the environment, Part 1 of a Full Environmental Assessment Form has been prepared by city staff, a copy of which is attached and made part of this Resolution,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that:

1. Based upon its examination of the Full Environmental Assessment Form and comparing the proposed action with the criteria set forth in 6 NYCRR Part 617, no significant adverse impact to the environment is known, and the purchase of the golf course land will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment.
2. The Mayor of the City of Watertown is authorized and directed to execute Part 3 of the Environmental Assessment Form to the effect that the City Council is issuing a Negative Declaration under SEQRA.
3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

**Seconded by Council Member Clifford G. Olney III**

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council considered Part 2 of the Full Environmental Assessment Form. A lengthy discussion occurred, in particular about Questions 1, 4, 10 and 16, but the majority of Council determined that the impact was either none or small.

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.**

**Resolution No. 4 - Reaffirming the Readoption of the Fiscal Year 2022-23 General Fund Budget – Purchase of Golf Course**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS on December 19, 2022, the City Council approved a resolution readopting the General Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23 to shift funding that would have gone into the Capital Reserve Fund to the Capital Fund to provide funding for the purchase of assets from Watertown Golf Club, Inc. and 1 Thompson Park, LLC in the amount of \$3,400,000, and

WHEREAS an environmental review pursuant the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) should have been completed before the decision was made to allocate funds for the acquisition of the land, and

WHEREAS the City Council has now determined that the purchase of the land will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby reaffirms its readoption of the Fiscal Year 2022-23 General Fund Budget on December 19, 2022 in light of the Negative Declaration made pursuant to SEQRA.

**Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey**

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council Member Ruggiero noted that this resolution and the ones following are to show that the SEQRA was done.

Mr. Mix confirmed, stating that it will put things in the right order.

Mayor Smith noted that Council passed a resolution to authorize obtaining an appraisal and he said the City should still get that done. He mentioned the City's former legal counsel's advice and that two independent appraisals should be done prior to the purchase, so he said he will not support this.

Council Member Pierce asked for the status of the appraisal.

Mr. Mix explained that he has authorized one to be done and is working on getting a second one. As far as the equipment is concerned, he said it was suggested that he contact an auction service, such as Brzostek.

Council Member Pierce noted that the City did not meet the developers' deadline of December 31, so she wondered what that meant and if the City could wait until the appraisal is done.

Council Member Ruggiero explained the deal is only on hold until the Judge's decision on January 11 and stressed that the agreement was already accepted without the appraisal being a part of it.

Council Member Olney advised that the intent of the deadline was to provide time to make preparations for the operation of it in the springtime, so he said this does not change anything.

There was discussion of the public's understanding or misunderstanding of the details on this deal and further discussion of the suggestion of eminent domain.

Mayor Smith stated that, when spending taxpayers' dollars, there should be further scrutiny and transparency. He discussed the reasons why he will not support this.

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.**

**Resolution No. 5 - Reaffirming the Readoption of Fiscal Years 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget – Purchase of Golf Course**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS on December 19, 2022, the City Council approved a resolution readopting the Fiscal Years 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget to provide funding for the purchase of assets from Watertown Golf Club, Inc. and 1 Thompson Park, LLC in the amount of \$3,400,000, and

WHEREAS an environmental review pursuant the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) should have been completed before the decision was made to allocate funds for the acquisition of the land, and

WHEREAS the City Council has now determined that the purchase of the land will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby reaffirms its readoption of the Fiscal Years 2022-23 through 2026-27 Capital Budget on December 19, 2022, in light of the Negative Declaration made pursuant to SEQRA.

**Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey**

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Mayor Smith reiterated that he does not support this for the reasons that he has previously given.

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.**

**Resolution No. 6 - Reaffirming the Approval of the Asset Purchase Agreement with Watertown Golf Club, Inc. and 1 Thompson Park, LLC**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS the City Council approved an Asset Purchase Agreement with Watertown Golf Club, Inc. ("The Club") and 1 Thompson Park LLC ("1TP") on December 12, 2022, and

WHEREAS an environmental review pursuant the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) should have been completed before the decision was made to acquire the land, and

WHEREAS the City Council has now determined that the purchase of the land will not have a significant adverse impact on the environment,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Watertown hereby reaffirms its approval the Asset Purchase Agreement on December 12, 2022 in light of the Negative Declaration made pursuant to SEQRA.

**Seconded by Council Member Patrick J. Hickey**

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, the condition of the club house and the age and condition of the equipment were discussed.

Council Member Pierce stated that she put pictures of the golf carts covered in snow from the blizzard on Facebook because she is worried about the long-term effect of the carts being left out for the winter.

Council Member Ruggiero indicated that there is a guarantee in the contract that the carts will be in working order at the start of the golf season.

Council Member Olney said this was negotiated in good faith and since the deal was thought to have closed earlier, they did not get to store the carts in time before the snowstorm. In terms of the lawsuit, he said he feels it is another effort to delay the process and stated that, once the Judge makes his decision on January 11, he plans to release everything that he knows about what he has termed as “Golf Gate.” He added that the Council Members supporting this are all working towards the best interests of the City.

Mayor Smith added that when spending other people’s money there should be more than just a handshake and Council should be doing its due diligence. He asked why the public is not being told everything up front, and again questioned the transparency of this deal. He remarked that spending this amount of money is not fiscally responsible and suggested that Council take a step back and wait for the appraisal since the closing will not be done by the deadline of December 31.

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea except for Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and Mayor Jeffrey M. Smith voting nay.**

**Resolution No. 7 - Finding that Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of VL-1 Bellew Avenue South, Parcel Number 9-11-108.001 From Residence B to Commercial Will Not Have a Significant Impact on the Environment**

**Introduced by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero**

WHEREAS the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, has before it an Ordinance for the zone change application of Robert J. Busler, P.L.S. of LaFave, White & McGivern, L.S., P.C. on behalf of ARBEL, LLC, to change the approved zoning classification of VL-1 Bellew Avenue South, Parcel Number 9-11-108.001 From Residence B to Commercial and



WHEREAS the City Council must evaluate all proposed actions submitted for its consideration in light of the State Environmental Review Act (SEQRA), and the regulations promulgated pursuant thereto, and

WHEREAS the approval of the zone change constitutes such an “Action,” and

WHEREAS the City Council has determined that changing the zoning classification of this property is an “Unlisted Action” as that term is defined by 6NYCRR Section 617.2 (al), and

WHEREAS there are no other involved agencies for SEQRA review as that term is defined in 6NYCRR Section 617.2 (t), and

WHEREAS to aid the City Council in its determination as to whether the proposed zone change will have a significant impact on the environment, Part 1 of a Short Environmental Assessment Form has been prepared by the applicant, a copy of which is attached and made part of this Resolution,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Watertown, New York, that:

1. Based upon its examination of the Short Environmental Assessment Form and comparing the proposed action with the criteria set forth in 6NYCRR Section 617.7, no significant impact is known, and the adoption of the zone change will not have a significant impact on the environment.
2. The Mayor of the City of Watertown is authorized to execute Part 3 of the Environmental Assessment Form to the effect that the City Council is issuing a Negative Declaration under SEQRA.
3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

**Seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce**

Prior to the vote on the foregoing resolution, Council considered Part 2 of the Short Environmental Assessment Form

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

**Ordinance Changing the Approved Zoning Classification of VL-1 Bellew Avenue South, Parcel Number 9-11-108.001 from Residence B to Commercial.** *(Introduced on 12/19/2022; public hearing held this evening; appears in its entirety in the 2022 Minutes Book on page 13-14 of the 12/19/2022 minutes).*

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing ordinance and carried with all voting yea.**

**Resolution - Approving the Site Plan for a 12,632 sq. ft. Parking Lot Expansion and Associated Site Improvements at 111 Breen Avenue, Parcel Number 8-01-214.100.** *(Introduced on 12/19/2022; tabled; appears in its entirety in the 2022 Minutes Book on page 10-12 of the 12/19/2022 minutes).*

**Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to remove the foregoing resolution from the table. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

Council Member Hickey read the email that was received by Council (included in the Communications above) stating that Dr. Doldo and Mr. Puccia have come to an agreement and would like Council to proceed with passing this resolution.

**At the call of the chair, a vote was taken on the foregoing resolution and carried with all voting yea.**

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **Restore NY Grant Application Public Hearing – YMCA, 146 Arsenal Street**

**Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to schedule a Public Hearing to hear public comments on the RESTORE NY grant application for 146 Arsenal Street for Monday, January 17, 2023 at 7:15 P.M. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

### **Restore NY Grant Application Special Project Public Hearing – Greenleaf Builders, 567 and 571 Fairbanks Street and 629 Factory Street**

**Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to schedule a Public Hearing to hear public comments on the RESTORE NY grant application for 567 and 571 Fairbanks Street and 629 Factory Street for Monday, January 17, 2023 at 7:15 P.M. Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Recent Meetings and Upcoming Events**

Council Member Hickey announced the following upcoming meetings and events: Eclipse Meeting on January 12, Jefferson Leadership Conference on January 13, Snowtown Festival on January 13 - January 15 and Full Alliance hybrid meeting on January 17. For Snowtown Festival, he listed the individual events to be held each day and provided the locations and time for each.

### **Drug Free Communities Support Workshop**

Council Member Hickey indicated that he will be attending this workshop in Washington DC at the end of January. He explained that it is a four-day conference which is an effort to mobilize communities to prevent and reduce youth substance use.

### **Boards and Commissions / Doug Anderson Suggestion**

Council Member Hickey stated that he received an email from Doug Anderson, who is disappointed with the population makeup of the Boards and Commissions. He said that Mr. Anderson does not feel the members represent those that are directly impacted by the committees and their policies. He said Mr. Anderson questioned the criteria used to choose the members that are appointed.

During her New Business, Council Member Ruggiero noted she had received an email too as well. She noted that he made some good points about how to get more people involved on committees.

#### **Poverty Rates Among School-Aged Children**

Council Member Hickey noted that the Watertown City School District has 4,530 children aged 5-17 years old. He said that of those children, 1,113 are living in poverty, which equates to 24.5%.

#### **New COVID Variant**

Council Member Hickey advised that the CDC has issued a warning for a new COVID variant called XBB.1.5, which is rapidly spreading across the United States. He announced that the Federal Government is giving away four free home COVID kits and provided information on how to request them.

#### **Fentanyl Vaccine**

Council Member Hickey indicated that a research team from the University of Houston has developed a vaccine targeting Fentanyl that could block the ability to enter the brain and thus eliminate the drug's high and deadly effects.

#### **NYS Climate Action Council**

Council Member Hickey advised that the State adopted the Climate Action Council's recommendation requiring energy efficient electric heat pumps or other non-combustion heating systems in every home built in 2025 and thereafter. He added that existing homes needing to replace their current systems after 2030 must install a zero-emission system.

#### **Drug Enforcement Administration / Fentanyl Seized**

Council Member Hickey said the Drug Enforcement Administration announced on December 20 that they had seized 379 million potentially fatal doses of Fentanyl in 2022, which is double the amount seized in 2021.

#### **Bail Reform / Recent Drug Arrests**

Council Member Olney mentioned that a man was arrested in Oswego County with over 500 packs of Fentanyl and held in jail and he negatively compared that to the Jefferson County arrest of man with 7,000 packets who was released on his own recognizance.

#### **Destruction of Apartments / Housing of Indigents / Rental Costs**

Council Member Olney complained that the City does not do enough to prevent the destruction of rental property, and no one is prosecuting them. He further complained of the cost to house the homeless in a West Carthage motel and that the Department of Social Services (DSS) is unable to place people in Watertown housing due to this issue. Council Member Olney further commented that there are 500-600 families in the City of Watertown who are close to being homeless because they cannot afford to pay the rent. He stated that the County is trying to deal with the problem but said putting the homeless in

temporary housing was not the solution. He mentioned there are some things in the works in the City to address the problem, including the mental wellness facility on State Street.

### **Privilege of the Floor Protocol**

In response to Robert's comments during Privilege of the Floor, Council Member Olney stated that he would prefer if Council Members could address speakers right away rather than at the end of the meeting. He said he would be introducing a resolution to change this policy. He further noted that he objected to hosting a Privilege of the Floor at the December 12 Special Meeting because of his inability to respond directly. He said that making a person who speaks during Privilege wait through all the Resolutions to have their topic addressed does not make sense.

### **Tax Abatement / Police Reports for Damage Property – Privilege of the Floor**

Regarding Mr. Bonner's comments during Privilege of the Floor, Council Member Olney said he agrees with a tax abatement for rental properties which have significant damage caused by renters. He stated this kind of damage decreases the value of the property. Regarding police reports, he requested from Mr. Mix a list of the City Police procedures for dealing with property damage. He asked why police reports were not done for situations like Mr. Bonner's.

Mr. Mix replied that he had not gone through all of Police procedures but did not think there was a specific policy on this topic.

Council Member Olney requested the Police file more detailed reports on property damage incidents for the benefit of landlords for insurance purposes.

### **Olney's First Year on Council**

Council Member Olney cited his accomplishments over the past year and thanked the public who put him there.

### **Lake Placid vs. Watertown as a Recreation Destination**

Council Member Olney mentioned Mayor Smith's radio commentary about the qualities of Lake Placid, noting that he should have the same enthusiasm for the City of Watertown. He commented that he feels Watertown could achieve the same level of international awareness as a recreation destination as Lake Placid through investment. He also mentioned that Old Forge has made itself a recreation destination with Enchanted Forest/Water Safari.

### **Hydroelectricity**

Council Member Olney reminded Council that there are a lot of opportunities to be explored with hydro and encouraged the Mayor to capitalize on those opportunities.

### **DPW Response to Blizzard**

Council Member Pierce thanked the Department of Public Works (DPW) for the amazing job they did clearing the roads during the Christmas blizzard.

Later in the meeting, Council Member Ruggiero agreed that snow removal had gone very well, and she thanked DPW Superintendent Pat Keenan and his staff. She said she particularly appreciated his storm updates, as they were very informative. She also noted that the cooperation between the City and State DOT had seemed very well organized.

During his New Business, Mayor Smith added his thanks to DPW as well as the Police, Fire and the Water departments. He also thanked the Governor for providing extra assistance during the storm as well as snow removal after the storm. He differentiated between the two storms the City had faced this season, noting the first storm had heavy wet snow that was much more difficult to deal with.

**Mr. Bonner's Issue / Privilege of the Floor Comments**

Council Member Pierce suggested that Mr. Bonner get in touch with his representative on the State level about ERAP funds.

During his New Business, Mayor Smith added that he did not fully understand the issues here but noted the City Manager was the City's FOIL officer and any requests for information would be fulfilled by his office. He added that he was unsure what the insurance companies were looking for that the City was not able to provide.

**Christmas Tree Collection**

Council Member Pierce reminded City residents that Christmas trees would be collected until January 13 and more information was available on the City's website and Facebook page.

**Bus Stop or Shelter at Walmart**

Council Member Ruggiero asked if anyone had ever asked Walmart if the City could put a structure on their property.

Mr. Mix indicated he would look into this.

**Privilege of the Floor Protocol (continued)**

Mayor Smith reminded Council that, although he agrees with certain voiced frustrations with the Privilege of the Floor process, the purpose of the Privilege is for the public to be able to speak and for Council to be able to listen. He added that getting into a back-and-forth debate may not be the best public policy. He commented that sometimes there are simple questions that could be quickly addressed, but it was not a time for discussion of topics.

Robert from Watertown spoke again about how a proposal is brought to Council, stating that it would be nice to have that proposal immediately addressed, particularly to advise where the proposal should be directed. He specified that he had a proposal to deal with the homeless issue and he would appreciate direction on what the next step would be.

Mayor Smith offered that the best solution might be to view the proposals in a work session, which are held the second Monday of each month. He suggested Robert speak to Mr. Mix about his proposal and whether it should be on the agenda in an upcoming work session.

**Lake Placid (continued)**

Mayor Smith admitted he did really like Lake Placid and Old Forge but noted that the City of Watertown had something neither of those villages have: Three swimming pools and a golf course. He stated that he believed in investment in the City but stressed that should be through river development rather than pools and a golf course.

**Mayor T. Urling Walker**

Mayor Smith took the time to acknowledge that the City of Watertown had lost an icon with the death of Former Mayor T. Urling Walker at age 97, noting he had remained active in the community as recently as last week. He said that Mayor Walker's impact on the City will be felt for many future generations. He stated someone cannot say enough good things about Tom Walker and he thanked the children of Mabel and Tom Walker for their parents' contributions to the community.

**Motion was made by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero to move into Executive Session to discuss proposed, pending, or current litigation.**

**Motion was seconded by Council Member Sarah V.C. Pierce and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

Council moved into Executive Session at 9:05 p.m.

Council reconvened at 9:32 p.m.

**A D J O U R N M E N T**

**At the call of the chair, meeting was duly adjourned at p.m. by motion of Council Member Patrick J. Hickey, seconded by Council Member Lisa A. Ruggiero and carried with all voting in favor thereof.**

**Ann M. Saunders**  
City Clerk